
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6368

AN ACT CONCERNING THE CHOICES HEALTH INSURANCE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

SUMMARY:

This bill makes minor and technical changes to the state's administration of the CHOICES program. The program, which primarily helps seniors with their health care choices, including purchasing Medicare supplements, is authorized by and funded under both federal and state law.

The bill:

1. transfers CHOICES' administration from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to the new Department on Aging (which the law established on January 1, 2013 but is still under DSS' jurisdiction until its commissioner is appointed);
2. requires the program to provide consumers access to, instead of maintain, a toll-free telephone number for obtaining advice and information on Medicare benefits;
3. requires the program to provide information through appropriate means and format, instead of only through written material;
4. eliminates the requirement that the program develop and distribute a Medicare consumer's guide and make it available to anyone who requests it (the federal Medicare agency already publishes such a guide that is updated annually);
5. eliminates the requirement that the program provide a worksheet for consumers to use when comparing and evaluating Medicare plan options;

6. eliminates the requirement that the program collaborate with other state agencies and entities to develop consumer-oriented websites that provide information on Medicare plans and long-term care options (the Aging Department has a CHOICES website that appears to do this); and
7. permits the Aging Department, instead of requiring the program, to include any functions the agency deems necessary to conform to federal grant requirements.

The bill permits the aging commissioner to adopt regulations to implement these changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Related Bill

SB 837, reported favorably by the Aging Committee, also transfers administration of the CHOICES program from DSS to the Aging Department.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 18 Nay 0 (03/12/2013)